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## **Report Title**

Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence, November 2012

## **ABSTRACT**

The November 2012 issue of the Conflict Trends report is the eighth in a series of monthly publications from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED). This month is the first in a series of regionally-focused reports, looking at the West African states of Benin, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, and Mauritania.

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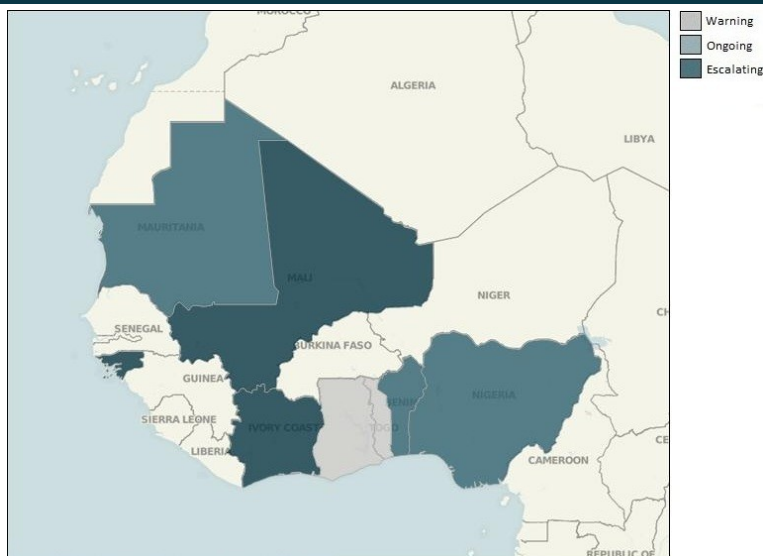
## CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 8):

### REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, NOVEMBER 2012

This month's *Conflict Trends* report is the eighth in a series of monthly publications from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED). Each month, realtime data on conflict events is gathered, published and analysed, and compared with historical patterns in violence levels, locations and agents to provide an insight into conflict change and continuity on the continent.

Last month's issue (available online at [acled-data.com](http://acled-data.com)) focused on a number of high-profile country cases (DR-Congo, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and South Africa). Each of these countries experiences extremely high levels of violent conflict events and associated fatalities, though each has a distinct conflict profile which speaks to the different drivers of political violence in each case.

ACLED publishes data and analysis for the entire African continent from 1997 to date: this month is the first in a series of regionally-focused reports, looking at the West African states of **Benin, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali and Mauritania**. A regional focus allows us to turn our attention to case studies which may experience lower overall levels of violence than high-profile country cases, but whose internal volatility and drivers of violence are significant both regionally and in discerning broader processes in Africa.



#### Conflict trajectory, West Africa, October 2012

This month also sees a continuation of our special focus feature, with attention turned to the activity, role and nature of **Nigeria's Boko Haram** group.

This special focus tracks the group's origins, aims and patterns of violent behavior. Geographic patterns as well as patterns of engagement with civilians and state forces are explored, before turning to potential future developments in the conflict.

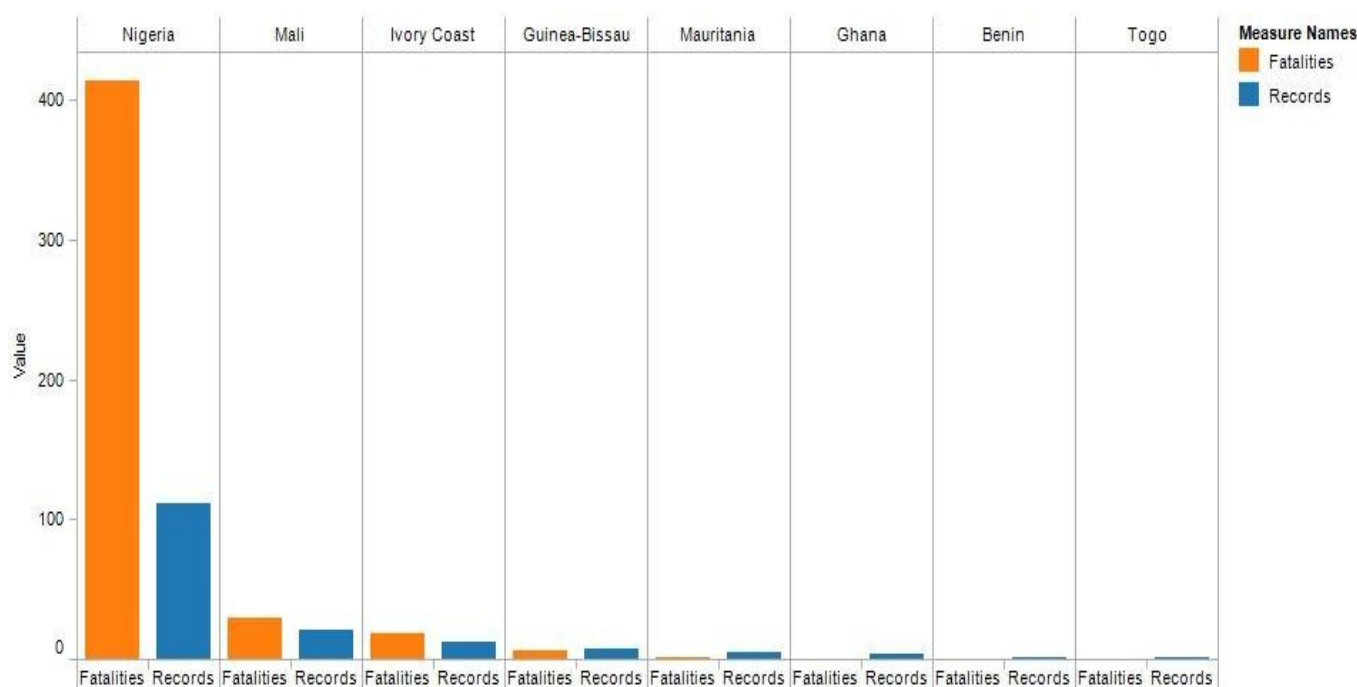


Figure 1: Conflict events and reported fatalities by country, October 2012.

#### Benin

October was a difficult month to be a West African leader. After family members alerted President Boni Yayi of Benin to an attempted poisoning, his niece, the former minister for trade and his doctor were arrested. Allegations that particularly business interests initiated the plan continue to gain attention.

This is the second attempt of Boni Yayi's life; the first occurred during election campaigning in 2007. The surprise poisoning development occurred in a state that is considered reliably democratic and stable, despite severe under-development and rife corruption. Political violence rates are some of the lowest on the continent, despite a rise in pirate activity on the coast in recent years.

Benin's conflict profile is dominated by riots and protests, followed by sporadic and relatively low levels of violence against civilians (see Figure 2). In spite of this comparatively low incidence of violence, it is clear that conflict levels overall have been increasingly significantly in recent years. Benin's conflict profile is also geographically concentrated: 71% of violent conflict events take place in Cotonou.

Conflict-related fatalities are also extremely low, and have not increased alongside event numbers.

Reports on destabilization were evident since August, when Boni Yayi mentioned in an interview that different business interests were scheming to ferment a crisis. Boni Yayi has been suspected of wanting to alter the constitution to allow for a third term in office; those concerns are abated by recent proclamations about constitutional adherence. Yet this, and the President's recent crackdown on profitable arrangements with select business leaders, have been forwarded as reasons for the attack on his person.

In spite of this, the democratic system appears strong: fourteen parties ran in the 2011 election, where the lion's share of votes went to

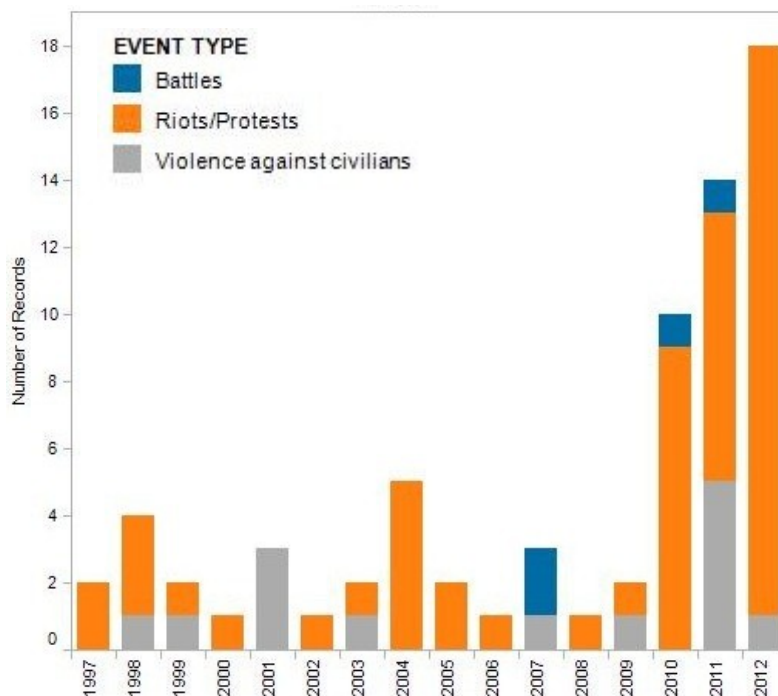


Figure 2: Conflict events by type, Benin, 1997 - October 2012.

the incumbent president (53.2%), thereby avoiding a second run-off election that had become a staple of Benin's electoral contests. The opposition insisted the results were due to widespread fraud, and there was a limited increase in violence against civilians and rioting.

**Benin's conflict profile is dominated by riots and protests, followed by sporadic and relatively low levels of violence against civilians. In spite of its comparatively low incidence of violence, conflict levels overall have been increasing in recent years.**

Even Benin is not immune to the transnational threats of West Africa: piracy has been on the rise for a number of years, in particular around the maritime areas of Nigeria and Benin. Lloyds of London has declared over 350km offshore to be a 'war risk' zone in reaction to the increased number of piracy attacks (*AfCon* 21 October 2011).

The piracy activity is often linked to Niger Delta militant groups, but Benin's limited coastal defense pushes them into this space, over Nigeria's. The exact number of attacks are unknown, with over half suspected to go unreported, and their activity is less likely to result in overtaking ships for ransom as we have come to expect from Somali pirates. These 'Gulf of Guinea' pirates frequently

steal loot from hijacked ships and move on (*AfCon* 21 October 2011).

Benin may well survive these bumps in the road; if not for the heavy hand the government uses of dissenters, then for the international support of Benin as a calmer port in a stormy West African sea. As shown by the accompanying figure, Benin's violence is the calmer, protest variety that any leader would prefer.

#### Ghana

Ghana is an unlikely contender in a pageant of 'conflict states': it is one of the least violent places both in West Africa and the continent at large. Its violence typically consists of militia attacks on civilians within Greater Accra, as well as protests within that space, supplemented by communal violence against ethnic communities across the state. The differences in fatality levels is clear from Figure x: Communal clashes account for the highest fatalities, and political candidates tend to take sides in this disputes.

However recent internal and external developments are threatening this general peaceful state. violence has increased substantially since 2008 (relative to typical Ghanaian rates). In particular, 2012 is already Ghana's most violent year of late, showing increases in riots, battles and attacks on civilians (see Figure 3).

Accusations of violence by the presidential candidates and their supporters forced President Mahama to insist that all measures will be taken to limit the potential violence leading up to the December 7<sup>th</sup> elections. A recent declaration that 20,000 security personnel (5,000 from military) are to be deployed across that state to maintain law and order underscored the high stakes and risks of this election. Previous elections have not had such high temperatures: indeed 2000 and 2004 were more violent than earlier years, but 2003 witnessed an increase in both political and communal conflict. The most common perpetrators of political instability include unidentified armed groups, both main political parties and the Mamprusis ethnic community. The unidentified groups became a key player in 2003, 2009 and 2011 and appear in regions with intermittent high violence.

This election is a fierce contest between the two major parties: President Mahama's National Democratic Congress and Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo National Patriotic Party. Several reasons for the animosity in this cycle are 1) the discovery of oil in 2007, and its growing dominance of the Ghanaian economy, will overwhelmingly benefit the next party in power; 2) an increase in corruption and a lack

of an independent, accountable, transparent electoral commission is suggestive of pre-election manipulation; 3) allegations of a 'military training camp' (Ghana News Agency 24 October 2012), abusive public discourse and zero-sum politics is raising the stakes for the winner and loser of this election. An ethnic element has pervaded the campaigning, with Mahama insisting recently that the Mamprugu people of the north ignore rumors that a vote for the incumbent will lead to conflict between the Gonjas and Mamprusis (Ghana News Agency 1 November 2012) and NPP spokesperson insisting on calling the party 'We, the Akans' (Throup, 2011). Violence has occurred in the Northern region in the recent past (1994, 1995, 2002), and tensions appear to be highest there during this election. Attacks on NPP officials have occurred in the center of the state (Kumasi) in recent days.

Externally, Ghana's Western border has been especially porous for supporters of Laurent Gbagbo since April 2011. *Africa Confidential* (19 October 2012) notes that many former Ivory Coast government officials hoped to get the support of Jerry Rawlings, who gave a brazen speech in October to leaders of African states, where he implored them to seek opportunities for security. President Mahama has finally responded with arrests of Gbagbo's most vocal, Accra based, supporters. However, allegations that Liberian militia recruitment (ongoing now for over two years), is being funded by Accra sources, makes Ghana a key player in another diffusive West African conflict. A series of attacks in Ivory Coast were launched from Ghana's western border in late September. The border re-opened after a two-week delay.

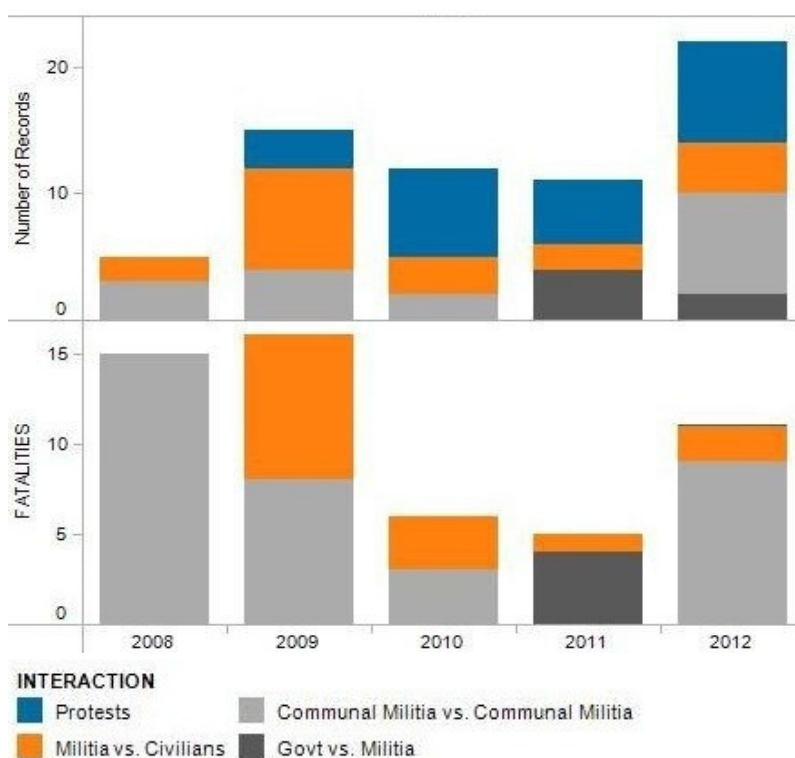


Figure 3: Events and fatalities by interactions, Ghana, 2008 - 2012.



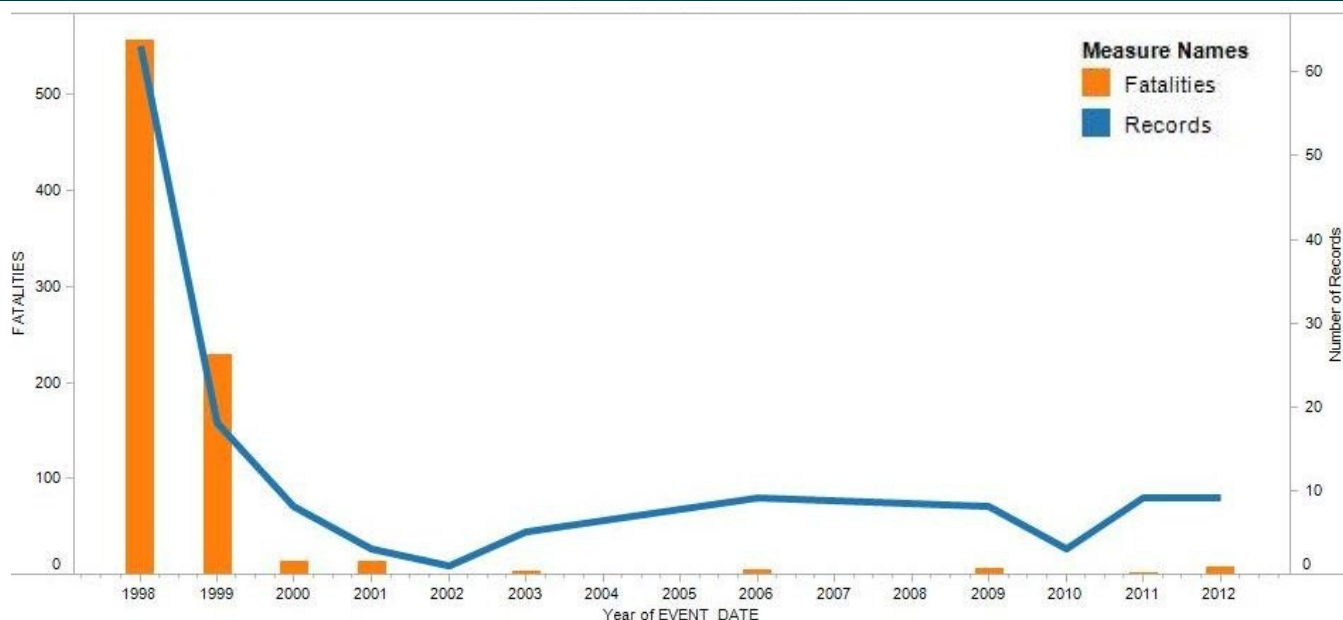


Figure 4: Conflict events and fatality numbers, Guinea-Bissau, 1998 - October 2012.

#### Guinea-Bissau

Late October saw a coup attempt at a military base in Bra, Guinea-Bissau, which led to six deaths. The attack was followed by the immediate allegation by the regime that Portugal was behind the attack, 'as part of a strategy to bring Carlos Gomes Junior back to Guinea-Bissau, even at the cost of human lives.' (Reuters, 22 October 2012) Portugal responded by calling for 'calm and an end to the violence,' (BBC, 22 October 2012) in what has been labelled Africa's most notorious narco-state.

2012 has so far seen rates of violence in line with the country's post-civil war (1998 – 1999) averages. In general, the country experiences a small number of sporadic and relatively low-grade violent incidents and very limited numbers of associated fatalities (see Figure 4).

Battles dominate the country's conflict profile, owing to the effect of the civil war. In post-war years, violence against civilians has been on par with battles, with only a small number of rioting and protesting incidents. The destabilising effects of this relatively small number of events are, consequently, reflective of the profound fragility of the state.

#### Despite the detainment of Ivory Coast's Gbagbo at the ICC, actions by his supporters have been on the rise since June.

#### Ivory Coast

Concerns about the internal security in Ivory Coast stem from two related developments. The first is the continued recruitment and resumption of former president Laurent Gbagbo's militia groups: the Young Patriots, FESCI, COJEP, Agora and Parliments vigilante groups and several western militias (MILOCI, AFOP etc). Different ethnic groups associated with supporting Gbagbo have become more active, including the Ebrie, Abbey and Bakoue.

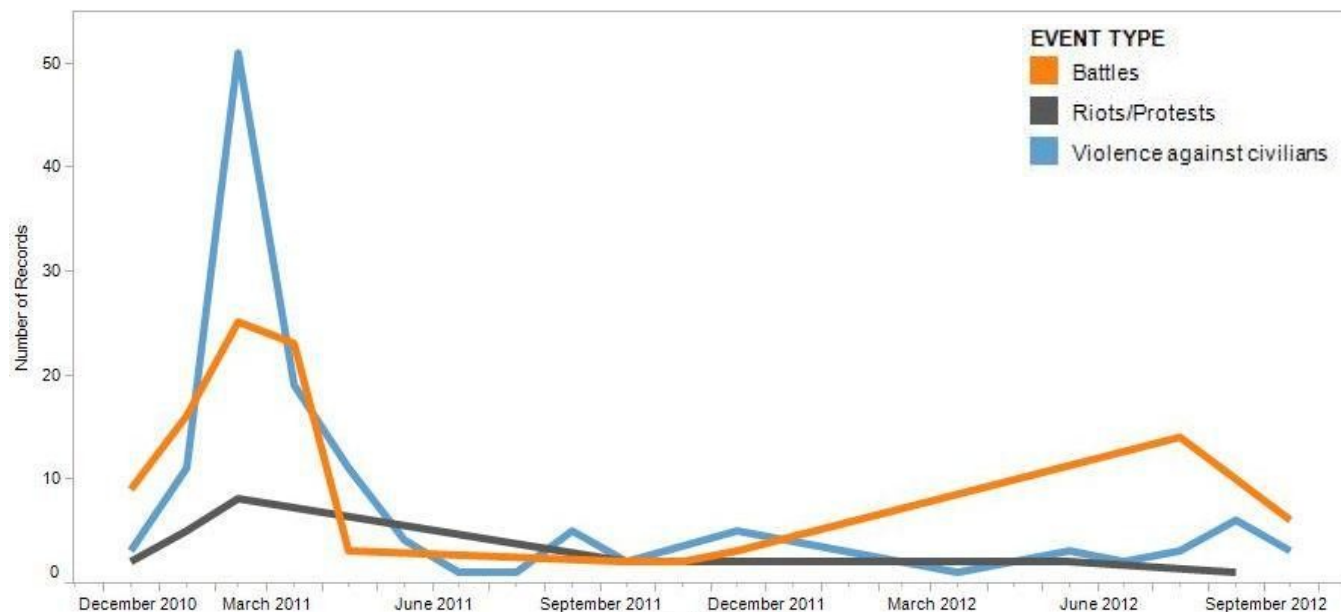
Despite the former leader's detainment at the ICC, actions by his supporters on are on the rise since June. Attacks launched from Ghana on police and army installations in Abijan, the border town of Noe and the power station in Bongouanou region, suggest that the targets are diversifying. Figure 5 shows that while violence

has decreased precipitously since the intense confrontations in 2011, the same undercurrents continue to drive conflict processes, and have led to an increase in violent events in recent months.

The second development is the response from the Ouattara government: IRIN and rights groups say that the government forces- in particular the Republican Forces (FRCI) - have been rounding up civilians and assaulting those suspected of pro-Gbagbo activities. Illegal detentions are in the rise, as is the reach of scope of the FRCI suppression of 'instability'.

The use of traditional authorities is an attempt by the government to limit the violence emanating from Liberia in the west. In short, although violence has dropped precipitously since the crisis, the ongoing tensions, the limited disarmament, and the integration of militias into the military, creates a fertile violence context.

## CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 8): REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, NOVEMBER 2012

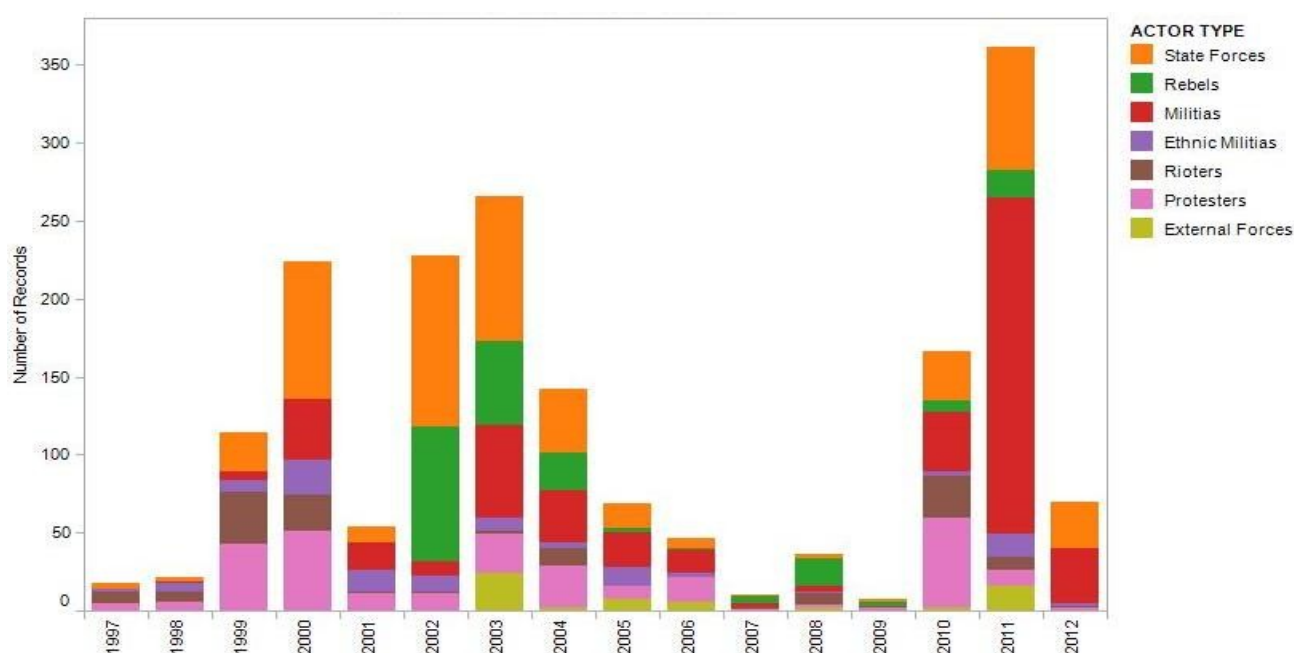


**Figure 5: Conflict events by type, Ivory Coast, December 2010 - October 2012.**

The most worrying threats still emanate from refugee camps Liberia, and particularly Grand Gedeh with movement south towards River Gee (*The Africa Report*, Nov 2012). A leaked UN report suggests that Gbagbo's supporters have been working with Malian groups- and in particularly *Ansar Dine*. This suggests that it is not an Islamist ideology that is unifying the

multiple opposition interests across West Africa, but a general sense of groups of taking advantage of opportunities as they arise. For Gbagbo supporters, assisting *Ansar Dine* in destabilizing Mali would also be an attack on Ouattara, who is currently the president of ECOWAS (*The Africa Report*, Nov 2012).

Figure 6 shows charts conflict events by actor type and highlights the increasing proportion of violence which can be attributed to militias, ethnic militias and other non-traditional conflict actors.



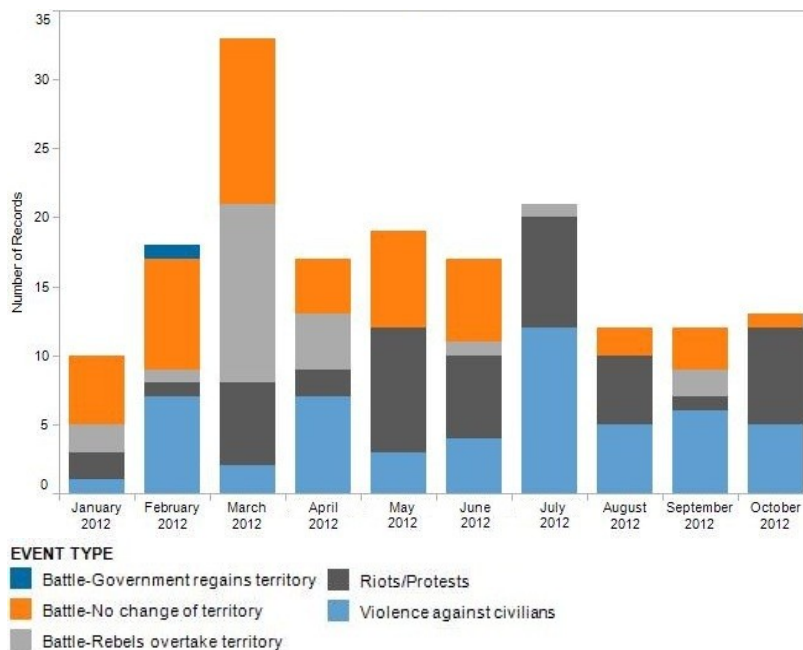
**Figure 6: Conflict events by actor type, Ivory Coast, 1997 - October 2012.**

#### Mali

The level of violent events in Mali in October was on par in with patterns in the country since August (see Figure 7), while associated fatalities dropped slightly. After an extended period of uncertainty, the month saw a series of developments in Mali aimed at addressing the country's multiple and overlapping crises. Following the country's formal request to the UN for a resolution on military intervention "to assist the Malian Army in capturing the occupied northern regions," on the 12<sup>th</sup> October the Security Council gave ECOWAS and the African Union a 45 day deadline to prepare a detailed plan.

Domestically, popular support has turned largely in favour of ECOWAS deployment, with several protests held over the course of the month in support of intervention. This is reflected in the significant increase in riots and protests witnessed in October (see Figure 7). A small – but vocal – opposition to the move – mostly drawn from supporters of Amadou Sanogo's March coup – remains active and vehemently opposed to the proposed deployment of ECOWAS troops in Bamako to shore up the government there (*AfCon*, 5 October 2012). Re-establishing security in the south, however, remains an ECOWAS priority precisely because of the instability of which such an opposition is the product.

Internationally, the game has changed with reiterations of the EU's commitment to provide logistical and training support in tackling the threat: "There is a willingness among member states to put boots on the ground - but only on the parade ground" an EU official reportedly said (Reuters, 30 October 2012). October also saw the active lobbying of Algerian support by France and US. Algeria has said it will not participate in the intervention in Mali; but its support – or at least acceptance – of the move will be critical to its success, as it remains the regional player with the most realistic military and intelligence capacity to effectively combat the threat of AQIM and affiliates. Algeria is likely to take some convincing that French-led efforts will not result in a resurgence of its influence in the region, while concerns that



**Figure 8: Conflict events by type, Mali, Jan - October 2012.**

eventual attempts to re-seize northern territory will push AQIM and affiliates back north into southern Algeria are also well-founded.

The increased momentum may be bearing some fruit: at the time of writing, Ansar Dine's spokesperson at talks in Burkina Faso declared that the group rejects "all forms of extremism and terrorism," and called on "armed movements to cease hostilities and take steps to establish trust required for inclusive political talks." (*AP*, 6 November 2012)

It is not surprising that Ansar Dine should prove the more willing to engage with the government. The recently founded movement is led by Iyad ag Ghaly, a shrewd political operator, whose previous machinations have seen him astutely position himself between rebellious Tuareg movements and the government in a series of complex constellations. Ultimately, getting the fickle ag Ghaly on side isn't much of a feat. Ansar Dine's activities in the captured northern territories have been dominated by violence against civilians in the sporadic enforcement of adherence to its interpretation of Sharia law. The group may exercise force in its treatment of resident populations, but it is unlikely to have the military or organisational capacity to withstand a coordinated campaign.

Dealing with the more hardline (and heavily internationalised) AQIM will be the real test of the ECOWAS force. Their forces, along with the affiliated MUJAO, have been more actively involved in armed battles – both with the few instances of armed opposition within the north, and in the groups' earliest territorial gains. Even if ECOWAS forces manage to recapture key urban centres – which, by any estimation, is unlikely to be soon – holding those territories and establishing security in the face of hit-and-run attacks will prove extremely challenging, as the case of Somalia has shown.

## CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 8):

### REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, NOVEMBER 2012

#### Mauritania

The level of conflict events in Mauritania was relatively low and stable for the third month in a row in the country. This period follows significant unrest over spring-summer when event counts were consistently high. Fatality levels are very low on average in Mauritania.

This low activity level belies the significance of recent developments and likely future developments in Mauritania: October saw President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz wounded in what was reportedly an accidental shooting by a soldier at a checkpoint. Few in the opposition are convinced by the story, and used the President's absence to highlight the opaque nature of governance and military influence in Mauritania. At the time of writing, the President was yet to return to Mauritania or appear publicly, sparking protests among opposition groups at the military's perceived role in politics.

Protesters and demonstrators been very active in opposition since the election of 2009 essentially authorised the now-President's 2008 coup. Riots and protests peaked in the spring – summer of 2012 (see Figure9), and continue to dominate Mauritania's conflict profile. The opposition is hampered, however, by its diverse and diffuse nature, posing no clear and coordinated threat to the regime.

Of greater concern for stability in the coup-prone country is the deeply divided security sector – where cleavages are overlapping along regional, ethnic and religious lines among others. Retired military officers, with strong links to the active military establishment, are openly oppositional to the regime (AA, 22 October 2012).

Regionally, Mauritania has attempted to distance itself from intervention in Mali in what has been seen as an attempt to appease Islamist interests at home (*AfCon*, 19 October 2012). The move is not seen as particularly important strategically or militarily – although it is a change of course for a regime which has built up strong ties with the EU as a counter-terrorism partner in the region – but it does speak to mounting and counter-veiling pressures domestically which may be a sign of more change to come.

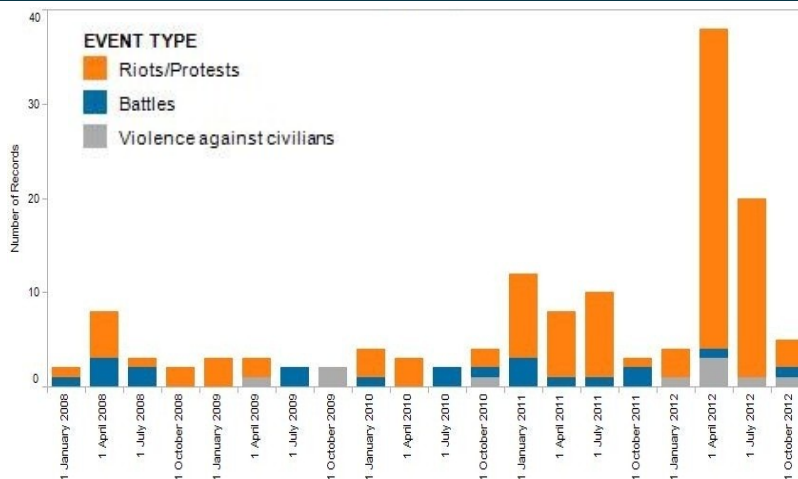


Figure 9: Conflict events by type, Mauritania, 2008 - October 2012.

#### Special Focus: Boko Haram\*

Boko Haram activity has increased for the sixth straight months and violence in October matched that of an intensely violent September in Nigeria's northern states. In almost daily attacks, Boko Haram split its activity evenly between battles with military forces and violence against civilians, with similar fatalities totals resulting from both: one hundred and twenty three civilians were killed, and one hundred killed between military and Boko Haram forces. Boko Haram activity since 2009 has had an unquestioned detrimental effect in the Northern states- estimates of deaths associated with this group are close to 3,000, with a slightly higher proportion due to battles with state forces.

Following patterns established earlier this year, Boko Haram rarely attacks civilians and fights with military forces in the same location and day. Of the approximately 26 locations that experienced Boko Haram activity in October, five (Maiduguri, Potiskum, Polo, Gwange and Chibok) had an overlap of battles and violence against civilians, and only two (Chibok and Maiduguri) had both actions on the same day (see Map 1).

October brought several surprising developments: it began with a highly fatal school attack by Boko Haram at the beginning of the month, and ended with a crackdown by military forces leading to the deaths of dozens of young men in early November, followed by the killing of a former Nigerian General Mohammed Shuwa. The response to the ongoing crackdown of state forces- and particularly the Joint Task Force- is believed to have potentially (1) stalled Boko Haram activity in the region; (2) forced the group into more diverse activities and spaces, such as Kaduna or (3) both. However, two trends counter the notion of successful state force: there is little evidence of a significant decrease in activity, and ample evidence that the diffusion of violence continues.

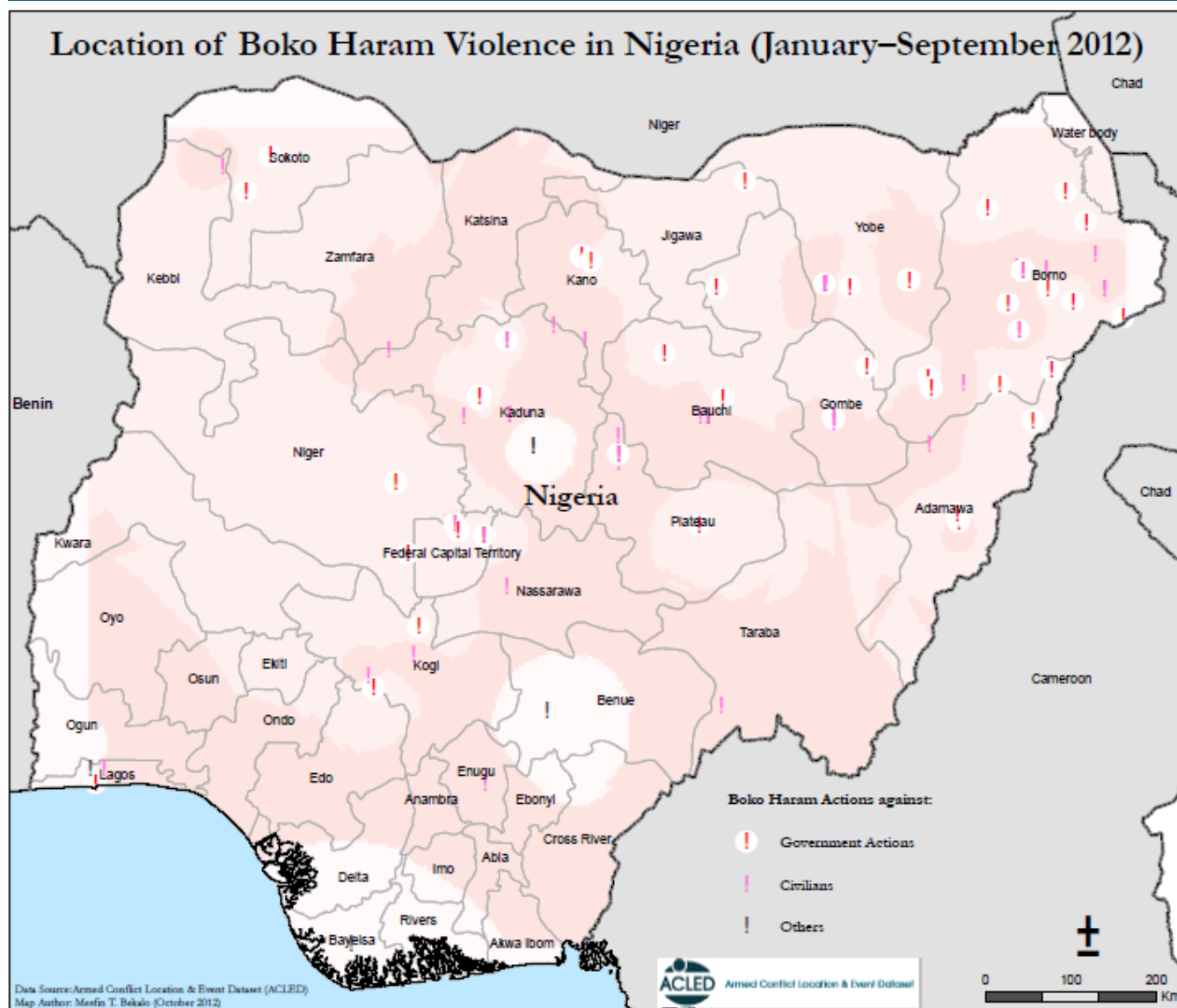
However, state force may have hastened a meeting: in mid-October, an unknown spokesperson for Boko Haram indicated that the group was considering dialogue with the government, providing conditions are

\*This material is based upon work supported by, or in part by, the U.S. Army Research Office contract/grant number W911NF-09-1-007 under the Minerva Initiative of the U.S. Department of Defense.



CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 8):  
REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, NOVEMBER 2012

Special Focus: Boko Haram\*



Map 1: Locations of Boko Haram violence in Nigeria, January - September 2012.

met. The stipulations include the arrest of the current governor of Borno and compensation of the losses suffered by member and families of Boko Haram. The unknown spokesperson may be the replacement for 'Abu Qaqa' who typically speaks to journalists, but he was killed in a September raid. Between internal fissures and reliability problems, this attempt at dialogue is seen as suspicious: there has been widespread denial of peace talks from other corners of Boko Haram; and no mention was made of the installation of Sharia Law in the

north, despite this being a well know objective of the group's present leader- Abubajer Shedeu. Nonetheless, the Nigerian government has rebuffed the offer as of early November.

There remain open questions about whether there are multiple 'Boko Harams' or a well-coordinated cell structure operating at the behest of the central council. We will consider those issues, and the actions, group patterns, origins, aims, and future of Boko Haram in this brief.

### Origins, Aims and Trends

Boko Haram is variously defined, but the differences essentially revolve around whether the group is "a militant sect driven by ideology of a

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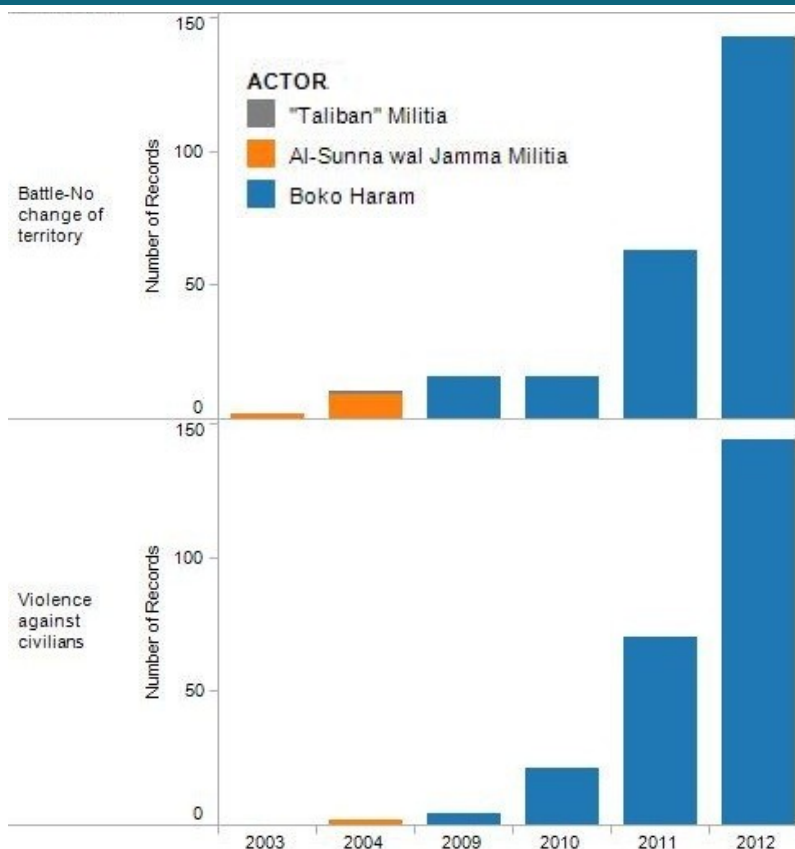
## CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 8): REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, NOVEMBER 2012

### Special Focus: Boko Haram\*

fanatical Islamic practice” where one faction focuses on local grievances and the other seeks contact with foreign terror groups (Aghedo and Isumah, 2012); or a militant group with strong ties to a group of senior military and police officers from the tenure of General Sani Abacha who were subsequently fired during the Obasanjo civilian administration (*AfCon* 16 March 2012). Its actions are largely directed towards attacks on Nigerian Federal and State agents and security services, ‘lax Muslims’, Christians and non-indigenes of Northern Nigeria.

Its northern context is critical: compared to the South, the North has double the rate of poverty and unemployment, lower infrastructure and development, with a poor reputation of governance and relationship with the military. Further, the level of volatility in the North-central region has often been overshadowed by the violence in the South. Aghedo and Isumah (2012) count over thirty crises in the region between 1991-2000, including the Kaduna anti-sharia riots, which led to an estimated over 5000, where the contested issues relate to religion and governance.

According to Onuoha (2012), Boko Haram has presented several stages of behavior, beginning with a “*Latent Incubation*” stage (1995-2002) when it was known as a harmless Islamic group operating as ‘Ahlulsunna walijama’ah hijra’; during its second “*Militant Mobilization*” stage (2003-July 2009) it was known as ‘the Nigerian Taliban’ and attacked public building and state security forces during Christmas time, 2003 in Yobe state’s Geidam and Kanama areas. There is reported evidence of Al Summa Wal Jamma militia actions, followed by a minimal number of ‘Taliban’ events in 2003-2004. There is a break in activity between 2005-2009, which set the stage for a highly active stage in July 2009. The Nigerian military began ‘Operation Flush’ with heavy bombardment in Maiduguri, Borno state; from there, the violence diffused to Kano and Yobe, creating local riots. Eight hundred are believed killing in these assaults, one of which was Boko Haram’s leader, Mohammed Yusuf.



**Figure 10: Boko Haram and precursor groups, Nigeria, 2003 - 2012.**

The third “*Islamic Insurgency*” phase from August 2009-May 2011 is characterized by guerrilla warfare, bombing attacks, assassinations and a highly mobilized, trained and diffuse group. The reported actions during these years do confirm high rates of bombings and diffusion, leading to assertions of ‘Boko Harams’ instead of a centralized force. However, the activity during this period was minimal compared to actions in the latter half of 2011 and 2012 (*see* Figure 10), and indeed most of the bombings, assassinations and mayhem occurred in the core North Eastern areas, and the events were equally distributed between battles and violence against civilians.

Finally, Onuoha asserts that from June 2011 to 2012, Boko Haram entered a “*Domestic Terrorist*” stage, where the group sought to extend its influence and associations beyond Nigeria, and take advantage of the Islamist turn in the larger region. Further, the group is believed to have focused on more suicide bombing during this period, as a way to avoid the new military task forces designed to eliminate the group. Again, the evidence does not confirm that this stage is distinct from the former insurgency stage- with clear engagement with military forces being a substantial part of the Boko Haram actions, and limited evidence of external affiliations (emphasized more by the Nigerian State than Boko Haram), the ‘terrorist’ stage has not convincingly manifest.

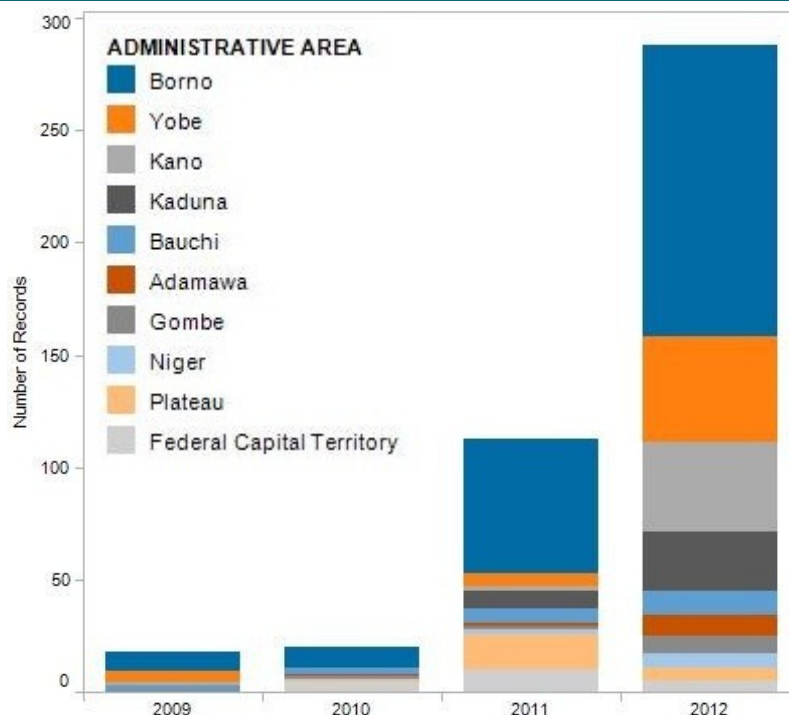
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That said, from September – October 2012, there has been more evidence of external connections: Niger has reinforced its southern border in a response to concern about the diffusion and potential contagion of Boko Haram into its Southern territory.

It has good reason to be concerned: arrests in Zinder at the end of September have increased suspicions that Boko Haram intends on extending its collaboration with cross-border groups, notably various Islamist groups in Mali. Despite the claims by Nigerian officials that Al-Qaeda (AQIM) is supplying and assisting Boko Haram, the group has never made any statements to confirm that. Indeed, Boko Haram's objectives may ally somewhat with the regional group, but the activities do not: Boko Haram has not, to date, attacked Western targets (barring an attack on the United Nations, which is regarded as a clear aberration to its typical patterns). This reluctance, or disinterest, in western targets, may be one reason that the US has not placed Boko Haram on international terrorist lists, despite pleas from the Nigerian government (see Figure 11).

There are two explanations for the impression that the group is made of a multiple 'Boko Harams': the first are that actions are being attributed to actors who claim to be affiliated or take on the name, but who remain outside of the 'official' Boko Haram organization. The group frequently asserts that unaffiliated actors use its 'brand'. Punishments for these groups are public beheadings or other forms of brutal violence.

The second possibility is that the group is not a centralized force, but instead a loosely affiliated collection of local cells, responding to local power dynamics, and committing acts of violence against political elites and communities it seeks to destroy or minimize. There is evidence of 'Boko Harams' although little to suggest the first or the second is the more compelling explanation: of the high activity spaces in Northern Nigeria (including Borno, Yobe and Kaduna states), an intensification of activity from 2009-2012 and a balance and consistency in types of attacks is evident.



**Figure 11: Territorial expansion of Boko Haram, Nigeria, 2009 - 2012.**

However, there are far more states with intermittent violence- often skewed towards violence against civilians, in spaces that are largely unaffected by typical Boko Haram action; in addition, these take place during periods of quiet in the more active North Eastern states and have not experienced the drastic rise in 2012 activity. In a comparison of Figures 11 and 12, the amount of small, scattered and unsustained activity in states outside of the 'highly active' North Eastern region speaks to a general difference in strategy between the original cluster and new spaces, but also an inconsistency in actions.

#### The Future

If this or future calls for dialogue are legitimate, there are several possible developments:

- 1) The political elites believed to be backing Boko Haram could come to light to collect on their 'investment'. Claims in the past have attributed the rise and effectiveness of Boko Haram to former Abeche regime, the governors of Northern states and the central government.
- 2) The violence in the north is likely to cease, if temporarily, and the central government may make inroads into developing the impoverished region. Given the strains of the central government at present, this seems like a hopeful, if unlikely, scenario
- 3) Talks may fail. This could be due to the demands of Boko Haram, the government's previous poor track record to acquiescing to violent groups, or Boko Haram's potential increased strength through

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'friendships' in surrounding countries. Northern Nigeria would be a feather in AQIM's cap, although US interests are unlikely to allow such a critical area to fall under the influence.

4) Despite insistence in some corners that Boko Haram may be considered a champion of the marginalized, it is those marginalized who would continue to suffer should the radical elements of the movement impose 'proper' Islam on both the Muslim and Christian inhabitants.

5) Boko Haram may in fact be 'Boko Harams', and negotiation with one could bring to light the weak central core of the movement, and hence the vulnerability of smaller groups to sustained military attacks. The 'official' Boko Haram has brutally treated those it believes to be mis-using its brand, with public executions and the like. It has recently said that much of the recent activity should not be attributed to Boko Haram adherents. If that is the case, it decreases its bargaining power relative to the Nigerian state, as the military and government are most interested in controlling the violence. However, if the central committee is a strong base, an eradication of other violent actors in the area should be expected.

6) The southern militia and rebel groups could see the success of Boko Haram as an indictment of their poor performance. An increase in southern activity should be ongoing and expected, if not to take advantage of the military's distraction in the north, then to try the same tactics as the successful northern opposition. However, the south is dealing with a far more resourceful enemy- the international oil business comes prepared to defend their territory.

#### Conclusions

In summary, Boko Haram is a product of its environment and time: the North of Nigeria has long been economically underdeveloped and militarily repressed. Although Boko Haram does not present itself as a solution to the first issue, and support in the North is difficult to ascertain given the level of attacks on civilians, it remains a product of an unstable context

where regional and federal government is considered corrupt and unresponsive. Further, the time for Islamist groups to work domestically and internationally is now- not only does Boko Haram have a radical Muslim base from which to recruit and operate from, neighboring groups are eager to share resources and knowledge in exchange for a sustained international struggle. There is little doubt as to the detrimental effect Boko Haram and Nigerian Government activities in the north. With almost 3000 people dead from the fighting, and 2012 as the most active year, the roots of this problem cannot be solved with attempts at dialogue or military crackdowns.

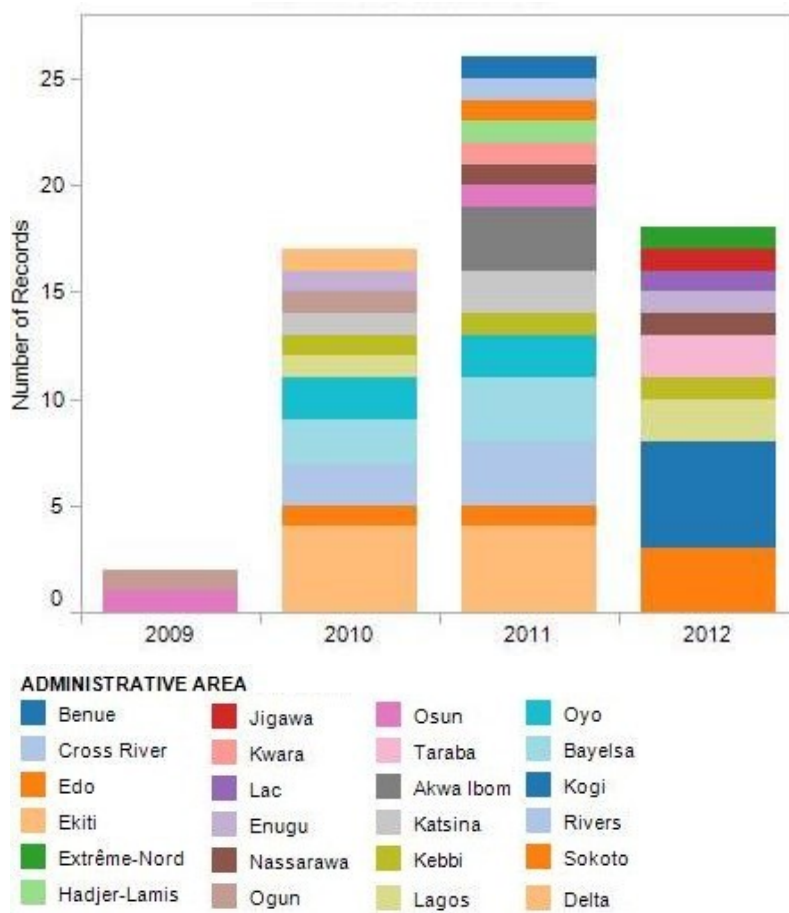


Figure 12: Boko Haram activity in low-intensity areas, Nigeria, 2009 - 2012.

#### Sources

The information in this issue of ACLED *Conflict Trends* was compiled from a variety of sources, including ACLED data, compiled from news reports; NGO reports, and Africa-focused news reports. Citations refer to African Confidential (*AfCon*); Associated Press (*AP*); Agence France Presse (*AFP*); African Arguments (*AA*); Reuters News Service and BBC News. Further information can be found online at [www.acleddata.com/](http://www.acleddata.com/)